United Nations A/62/906

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 July 2008

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 49
Culture of peace

Letter dated 27 June 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the enclosed document, entitled "The Mecca Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue", issued by the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue organized by the Muslim World League in Mecca, under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, from 30 Jumada 1-2 Jumada 2, A.H. 1429 (see annex). Kindly circulate as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 49.

(*Signed*) Abdullatif H. **Sallam**
Counsellor
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Annex to the letter dated 27 June 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

The Mecca Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue

Issued by

The International Islamic Conference for Dialogue

Organized by

The Muslim World League

in Mecca

Under the Patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud

30 Jumada 1-2 Jumada 2, 1429 A.H.

June 4-6, 2008

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and the peace and blessings of God be on our master Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets and Messengers, who was sent as a Mercy to all creatures.

By the grace of God, the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue (IICFD) organized by the Muslim World League has concluded its deliberations under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. May God protect him and sustain through him the munificence of the people and of the country. IICFD was held in Mecca between 30 Jumada 1 and 2nd Jumada 2/, 1429 A.H., corresponding to the June 4 through 6, 2008.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques inaugurated the conference with a comprehensive speech in which he thanked the scholars and leaders of the Ummah participating in this conference and confirmed that they are meeting to say to the whole world that we are a voice of justice and ethical human values, co-existence, just and wise dialogue and of exhortation and argument with what is best, in compliance with the verse: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." (The Holy Quran, 16:125)

King Abdullah also stressed the challenges that face the Muslim Ummah at a time when some Muslims and people of other faiths have adopted extremism and militancy at the expense of just methodology by using flagrant aggression that targeted the tolerance, justice and sublime ends of Islam.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques emphasized the importance of dialogue in Islam and reminded the participants that the revealed messages have all called to the good of humankind, preserving human dignity and enhancing the values of ethics and truthfulness.

"We are commencing our dialogue with the confidence we derive from our belief in God and with knowledge taken from the tolerance of religion, and that we debate in the best and most gracious way. What we agree on, we hold fast to and place in our hearts, and what we disagree on, we refer it to God saying, "To you be your way and to me mine," the monarch said.

At the inaugural session, His Excellency former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Council for Diagnosing the Interest of the Regime and Head of the Council of Experts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed his profound gratitude to both the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud (May God protect him) and to the Muslim World League for organizing this conference in which numerous sublime Islamic meanings were embodied.

H.E. President Rafsanjani said the significance of the conference was increased by the fact that it is being held only meters from the Safa Mountain from which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) declared his call. He also said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has launched with this infinitive a new call and rendered to mankind a great message. At the end of his talk, H.E. President Rafsanjani said he hoped that the conference is a preparatory step and introduction to hold dialogue with the followers of religions, cultures and schools of thought.

In his speech at the inaugural session, His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdullah Al-Shaikh, Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and chairman of the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League, indicated that dialogue among mankind is one of the necessities of life and that it is a means for coexistence, acquaintance and exchange of interests among members of the Ummah and humankind. He said that disagreement is always present in the very nature and ethics of people who differ in their languages, races, temperaments and levels of knowledge. His Eminence also added that disagreement is a universal way, that the divergence of people in their opinions and beliefs is an issue that was mentioned repeatedly in the Holy Quran. He confirmed the origin of all Prophetic messages is the same, as they have been revealed by God and that the religion of God is one.

In his address at the inaugural session, His Eminence Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, Grand Shaikh of Al-Azhar, expressed his appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Shaikh Tantawi said the conference is a new means for enhancing cooperative relations among the members of the Ummah. He also added man cannot live isolated from others in this life, particularly in this era when the whole world has become a global village. He added that when we base dialogue on tolerant speech, good intentions and honored objectives, its result will be beneficial and that it will be a means for reaching the truth as well as lessening disputes among people. Shaikh Tantawi noted that those who read the Quran will find it replete with different types of dialogues the prophets had with their respective peoples.

In his speech at the inaugural session, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Ibn Abdul Mohsin Al Turki, secretary general of the Muslim World League, indicated that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has appreciated the crisis that mankind is currently confronting as well as the disintegration and chaos of the family unit due to the ignorance of man to the guidance of the creator. H. E. Al Turki stressed the importance of cooperation on what the followers of divine messages, civilizations and cultures agree, which includes ethical principles that help diffuse world conflicts and restore the social status of the family and enhance the values of justice, cooperation, tolerance, and moderation.

H. E. Al Turki added that dialogue is a true Quranic method and prophetic practice and culture established in the memory of the Ummah with which relations with people of other faiths were affected since the advent of Islam as based on the tolerance of Islam and the essence of Islamic Shari'a from which Muslims take their message.

The participants applauded the concern of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud for dialogue and call on all nations to pay attention to it and to reject violence. The participants also confirmed the necessity to concern ourselves with what heavenly messages and books revealed to God's prophets, including sublime ethics and humane values, as well as concentrated efforts in what benefits man, preserves the family, which is considered the basic rectifier for society, and protects humankind from calls of vice.

The participants considered the speech of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques an important document of the conference and a basis for dialogue because it contained significant visions that are expected to achieve peace and positive co-existence.

Needless to say, the conference is being held at a time when the world is facing numerous challenges that pose threat to humankind's future, and warns of further universal moral, social and environmental catastrophes as an expected result of humankind's disregard of the guidance of its Lord.

The conference emphasized the fact that Islam offers successful solutions to these crisis, and that the Ummah, with its indispensable cultural reservoir is required to join hands with the others in order to counter challenges. God the Most Exalted says: "O people of the Scripture! Now hath Our messenger come unto you, expounding unto you much of that which ye used to hide in the Scripture, and forgiving much. Now hath come unto you light from God and a plain Scripture." (The Holy Quran, 4:15-16)

Of course other civilizations have their own vision toward these challenges that are wreaking havoc within humanity. They share with Muslims in the search for solutions to these crises and seek ways to surmount the challenges we all face.

God's messages and man-made philosophies have commonalities that advocate commitment to moral virtues and reject wrongdoing, aggression, moral degeneration, family disintegration, and damage to the environment.

A profound dialogue aimed at exploring human commonalities is essential for cooperation in programs of joint action that could help solve contemporary problems and protect humanity.

A large number of scholars and researchers, preachers, heads of Islamic centers and societies from various parts of the Islamic world and Islamic minorities communities around the globe, representatives of dialogue agencies and other institutions concerned with dialogue with human cultures and civilizations participated in the conference.

The participants discussed the following four pivotal points:

1. Islamic Legitimacy for Dialogue

2. Methodology, Rules, Regulations, and Means of Dialogue

3. With whom will we engage in dialogue?

4. The Basis and Themes of Dialogues

1. The Islamic Legitimacy for Dialogue

Islam Advocates Dialogue

The conference discussed the legitimacy of dialogue, Islam's promotion of dialogue and the numerous texts that promote dialogue and set forth its rules and manners:

First - The cause of the differences between nations and peoples, as well as their religious and cultural distinction is the will of God, the Most Exalted and His profound wisdom. This requires that they know one another and cooperate in order to serve their interests, solve their problems and cause them to live under good manners and vie with one another in constructing the earth and performing good deeds. (The Holy Quran, 5:48)

Second - Dialogue represents an authentic Quranic methodology and a Prophetic tradition through which the Prophets communicated with their people. The biography of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) presents a clear methodology in this regard through the dialogue of the Prophet and the Christians of Najran and his correspondence with great emperors and monarchs. Therefore, dialogue is one of the most important mediums of spreading Islam throughout the world.

Third - The Madina society that was established by the Prophet (pbuh) is the optimal model of positive coexistence of the followers of divine messages. The Madina document is seen as a source of

pride that may be emulated for civilized coexistence. It defined the spheres of cooperation to achieve common interests and to establish such noble human values as justice, charity and Ihsan.

Objectives of Dialogue:

Dialogue is one of the most significant ways in which Muslims can address the world; and through which Muslims can achieve a number of objectives, the most important of which are the following:

First - Introduce Islam, its principles and humane tenets and the great civilization heritage it possesses that enable it to effectively contribute to guiding the march of human civilization.

Second - Refute allegations leveled against Islam and rectify the distorted images of Islam, its states and organizations in religious, academic and media circles.

Third - Contribute to confronting challenges and offerings solutions to problems that face humankind as a result of their abandoning religion and departing from its principles and values, an act that led to the suffering of mankind from injustice, vice, terrorism, violations of human rights, and pollution of the environment that God Almighty has bestowed on them.

Fourth - Support and defend just causes pertaining to human rights violations and form an international public opinion that supports such causes and helps achieve their legitimate demands.

Fifth - Expose those promoting the clash of civilization and end of history theories. Reject their claims that Islam is an enemy of contemporary civilization thereby inculcating Islamophobia in the minds of people, imposing dominance of the world and disseminating a single culture.

Sixth - Acquaint ourselves with people of other faiths and their cultures and establish with them common principles that achieve peaceful co-existence and security of human society. Cooperate with each other in spreading ethical values, truth, benevolence, and peace, and challenging hegemony, exploitation, injustice, moral deviation, family breakdown, and other evils that threaten societies.

Seventh - Solve problems and dispute that may occur between Muslims and others in countries and communities, whether as majorities or minorities. Secure an atmosphere suitable for national and social co-existence.

Eight - Achieve understanding with humane cultures and civilizations as well as urge Muslims to join multi-civilization arrangements of mankind and use this understanding for achieving and protecting world peace.

Ninth - interaction and communication with the followers of Islamic schools of thought in order to achieve the unity of the Muslim Ummah and lessen fanaticism and antagonism. Continue

2. Methodology, Rules, Regulations and Means of Dialogue

The conference has discussed the methodology and rules of dialogue using Quranic verses that include dialogue lesson between Prophets and their people that outline the features of the legitimate

dialogue and explain its rules and prohibited aspects. The conference also tackled practical application of this methodology in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions and scholars following strictly his guidance. (The Holy Quran, 12:108)

The Conference Reaffirms:

First - To abide by the rules and ethics of dialogue that stress the fact that dialogue should be objective and must be carried out with wisdom and proof, and argument should be with wisdom and beautiful exhortation, without ridiculing the beliefs of other people, an act that is not accepted by Islam nor required by objectivity of dialogue. (The Holy Quran, 29:46)

Second - Objective dialogue, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the followers of divine messages do not mean compromising the fundamental principles of religion, negligence in religion or merging religions. It means cooperation for the good of humankind and preservation of his identity and rights, lifting injustice, repelling aggression, solving human problems and securing decent life. These are common principles that are embodied in the heavenly messages and ratified by earthy constitutions and human rights declarations. Thus dialogue is conducted based on the Quranic verse 109:6, "To you your religion and to me mine."

Means and Mechanisms of Dialogue

The participants recommended the Muslim world to give added attention to dialogue, its constitution, means and programs. In fact, they urged the Muslim World League to do the following:

First - Form an International Dialogue Commission, which will comprise the major parties concerned with dialogue and develop a united strategy for dialogue, with coordination and cooperation in connection with the concerned parties. The conference also adopted the establishment of an specialized team to be selected by the Muslim World League from the participants of this Conference in order to follow up resolutions of the conference and to study the required steps for setting up of an International Dialogue Commission and to chart a project for it to be presented to a later meeting to be held by concerned authorities in the Muslim World.

Second - Establish the "King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz International Center for Civilizational Interaction" with a view to disseminating the culture of dialogue, training people and developing their skills according to specific academic foundations.

Third - Create the "King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Award for Civilizational Dialogue" to be granted to international personalities and organizations that contribute effectively in promoting dialogue in a manner that helps achieve its desired objectives.

Fourth - Conduct conferences and symposiums and meetings of research groups on dialogue among followers of revealed messages, civilizations and cultures as well as philosophies to which academic, media personnel and religious leaders representing various international cultures are invited.

The conference expresses its profound gratitude to the numerous Islamic organizations for the efforts they rendered for promotion of dialogue, and encourage them to further coordinate and cooperate in the promotion of dialogue and its investment in achieving the interests of the Muslim Ummah via adopting the following steps:

Practice dialogue within its rules and legitimate objectives in a manner that achieve the higher interests of the Ummah, study all relevant matters of dialogue, abide by the ethics of Islam in dialogue, keep away from ridiculing others, take a position of equal dialogue partner together with taking pride in the cultural uniqueness of the Muslim Ummah and represent it in dialogue sessions in a manner that suits its civilizational status.

Coordinate among various Islamic delegations and unify the Islamic position via the international organization for dialogue in the Muslim World League. Consider it a comprehensive forum for dialogue associations and committees and abide by its strategic vision.

Encourage concerned bodies to focus dialogue on common interests and attempt to promote peaceful co-existence, justice, social security and to face contemporary challenges.

Spread the culture of dialogue in Muslim societies, give attention to the dissemination of the Holy Quran and its translation, warn people against calls for the clash of civilizations and their serious repercussions on world peace and cooperate in this respect with ministries of culture, information and education in Muslim countries.

Take advantage of dialogue experiments, seek to promote dialogue programs by fostering further cooperation with respective governments and organizations of Muslim states in their dialogue programs in order to upgrade dialogue of the Muslim Ummah and invest in achieving its objectives.

Select a number of specialized scholars with international experience in the various fields and themes of dialogue, train them adequately to participate positively in international dialogue forums.

3. With Whom Will We Hold Dialogue?

The conference has thoroughly discussed the past experiments in dialogue among Muslims during the past five decades and looks forward to future dialogue with various followers of divine messages, sects and cultures, and adopted the following:

First - To observe openness in dialogue on all attitudes influential in contemporary life, whether political, academic or related to media, and not to confine such matters to religious leaders.

Second - To arrange for dialogue to discuss all parties that adopt anti-Islamic attitudes, so as to explain the realities of Islam and to clarify erroneous concepts that cause insults to Islam.

The conference reaffirmed the need for further dialogue in order to achieve understanding and agreement on a formula that prevents the clash of civilizations.

Furthermore, the conference recommends the Muslim World League and other Islamic organizations to do the following:

First - Produce and publish multilingual media materials that refute theories of the clash of civilization, shed light on the future of humankind. Convene an international conference on the "Dangers of the Theories of Clash of Civilization on World Peace and Security" and encourage influential religious, cultural, political, and academic personalities to participate.

Second - To request countries and international organizations, the first of which is the United Nations, to confront both the culture of hatred among people and the sectarian calls that instigate hatred against others. Such calls will destroy world peace and security as well as contradict heavenly messages and international conventions and should therefore be considered a threat to peaceful co-existence.

Third - Call Muslims residing in Muslim minority countries to conduct dialogue that may solve the conflicts arising from time to time.

Fourth - Call on Muslims residing in Muslim minority countries to continue dialogue with the citizens of their respective countries and confirm to them their sincere commitment to citizenship, without neglecting their Islamic duties.

Fifth - Foster cooperation with governments of Muslim states and the leadership of Islamic organizations to request the United Nations and other international entities to condemn and repudiate insults to Islam, to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), to the Holy Quran, and to all the prophets and their messages.

4. The Basis and Themes of Dialogue

The conference has studied the basis on which serious dialogue is established in reference to common principles and underlined the importance of the general Islamic principles pertaining to dialogue and co-existence that lead to human contentment. These include the following:

First - Believe in the unity of humankind's origin and that people are equal in humanity and dignity. (The Holy Quran, 4:1)

Second - Reject sectarianism and fanaticism and denounce calls of hegemony based on the Hadith, "O people your Lord is one and your father is one and piety is the only criterion for preference of an Arab over non-Arab or a non-Arab over an Arab or red over black or black over red."

Third - Consider that God has created human with the natural instinct to love peace, hate evil, accept justice and reject injustice, and that the suffering of humankind is due to its rejection of the guidance of God and the Prophet. (The Holy Quran, 20:123-124)

Since Islam recognizes revealed messages, this encourages Muslims to carry out dialogue with the followers of such messages. Muslims believe that the source of heavenly messages revealed by God to his prophets is one.

Muslims are encouraged to hold dialogue with followers of the previous divine messages based on the fact that Islam recognizes the previous divine messages, and because the Muslims believe that the basis of the divine messages that God sent down onto His prophets is one;

i.e. invitation to worship Him alone. Muslims do not differentiate between the messengers of God. (The Holy Quran, 4:152)

Another encouraging factor of dialogue with the followers of other divine messages is the universality of Islam and its humanitarian laws, which are replete with implications for charity, justice and compassion for all of humanity. God says: "We have not sent thee [Muhammad], but as a Mercy unto all creatures." (The Holy Quran, 22:107)

Topics of Dialogue

The conference reviewed the issue of dialogue and called on Islamic and international institutions engaged in dialogue to give priority to the following topics:

First - Protecting values and morality against the promotion of moral degeneration under the guise of unrestrained individual liberty.

Second - Studying the phenomena and causes of terrorism, violence, excessiveness and describing others as rejecters of faith, and the means of eradicating them. Establishing international cooperation to encounter these phenomena and refuting the false allegations that label Islam and Muslims as terroristic by nature.

Third – Challenging manifestations of injustice, oppression, tyranny, and exploitation of the resources of poor nations under the pretext of liberation and guarding human rights.

Fourth – Countering manifestations of aggression against the environment so as to avoid the dangers and catastrophes that could affect all of humanity. (The Holy Quran, 6:56)

Fifth – Addressing the problems of the family and the collapse of the established family system of legal marriage and reproduction.

Sixth – Examining media in contemporary life and its tendency to corrupt moral values, instigate dissension and conflict and promote deviation, crime and addiction. Fostering international cooperation to direct media to perform effectively in promoting moral values and ethics.

Seventh – Addressing human rights and their violations and developing mechanisms that secure honorable life for humankind.

Eight – Developing solutions for the various challenges that face humankind on the cultural, social, ethical and educational levels.

The Declaration of the Conference to Peoples, Governments and Organizations

After having reviewed the challenges that face humanity, the conference issued a declaration to all governments, organizations and peoples irrespective of their religions and cultures, and calls on them to undertake the following:

First - Foster understanding between them and us that we believe in God as the creator, worship Him alone and seek the guidance He revealed to His prophets and messengers.

Second - Challenge injustice, tyranny, despotism, and hegemony and help each other in ending wars, conflicts and international problems. Work together for promotion of a culture of tolerance and dialogue, support institutions promoting dialogue. Use dialogue as a means to achieve understanding, cooperation and world peace. Desist from wasting human resources and exploitation of the talents of individuals in the productions of weapons of mass destruction that threaten the future of the earth.

Third - Cooperate with each other for the promotion of moral values and the building of international ethical arrangements that resist the attack of moral deviation, combat extra-marital relationships and provide solutions for the dangers surrounding the family in a manner that secures the right of all to live within a happy family.

Fourth - Work together as inhabitants of earth according to the wish of God who authorized our father Adam and his progeny to reform earth and halt aggression on the right of the coming generation to live in an environment devoid of all types of pollution. Minimize the dangers of environmental damage with common actions that seeks to lessen its consequences and guide industrial technological advancement.

Fifth - Cooperate with the world community in eliminating corruption and unhappiness, which need to be remedied through the mercy of God, which is the essence of the message sent to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). "We sent thee not but as a mercy for all creatures." (The Holy Quran, 21:107)

At the conclusion of the conference, the participants expressed their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Saud for his patronage of this grand conference and hope that he supports its resolutions and recommendations.

They also appealed to him to extend his kind invitation to those specialized in dialogue from the Muslims and from the followers of revealed messages and man-made philosophies to submit to them as soon as possible the Islamic vision of dialogue adopted by this conference and agree with them on a practical formula for fruitful international dialogue that contribute in the solution to the problems from which mankind is suffering. The monarch was also requested to use his international good offices via the United Nations, its states and organizations according to what he deems appropriate.

The scholars participating in the conference have confirmed their stand with him in his efforts for the service of Islam, Muslims and all humankind in a manner that secures cooperation, stability and peace among all world communities, with their different creeds and cultures. The participants have also expressed their deep appreciation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its promotion of dialogue and for its patronage of the conference.

The participants also applauded the sincere efforts exerted by the Muslim World League and its affiliate organizations in introducing and defending Islam and its messenger Muhammad (pbuh).

Finally, the participants reaffirmed the importance of continuing positive participation in the symposiums and meetings that had clear positive impact in promoting the culture of dialogue and in correction of many erroneous ideas about Islam and Muslims.

May God's benediction and peace be upon our Prophet, Muhammad, his kinsfolk and all his companions.

Issued in Mecca on 2/6/1429H - 6/6/2008